



**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
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## **Minutes 09/09/2010**

Arlington Recycling Committee  
Minutes 9/9/2010

Present: Gordon Jamieson (co-chair), Juli Brazile (co-chair and secretary for the evening), Jason Leatherman, Janet Crocker, Katrina Wheelock, Adrian Wheelock, Lizzie Linn Casanave, Hong Yin, Colette Lamontangne, Robert McGill

### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

A number of new people attended having indicated on the annual town survey they were interested in recycling issues and were added to our email list, so we briefly ran thru how the committee works.

### **ARLINGTON RECYCLING COMMITTEE**

This is a committee of town meeting and we have a budget to spend in support of recycling. We have 9 members, including our liaison to the DPW, Ruth Yannetti. Other committees (such as the Vision 2020 groups) are mandated by town by-law. We meet monthly (1st Thursday) during the school year.

### **MAJOR ACTIVITY REVIEW**

Over the years, we have settled on four outreach events during the year. At the events we have information about recycling, stickers, brochures, reusable bags - whatever makes sense. The events are:

- Town Day
- Fall Community Collection Day at the DPW Yard
- Spring Community Collection Day at the DPW Yard
- Eco-Fest

### **COMMUNITY COLLECTION DAYS**

The community collection days started to distribute blue bins, but those are no longer being widely distributed since the shift to single stream recycling. Now they are an opportunity for residents to bring CRT/TVs to be collected for a discounted fee and to drop off many items including: bikes, books, scrap metal, clothes, cardboard and have personal papers shredded. There are 2 of these events, one in the fall and one in the spring.

### **ECO-FEST**

The Eco-Fest is often held on the same weekend as the spring collection day and is a collaboration between a variety of gardening and ecologically-oriented groups in town and the DPW. At that event we provide residents with the opportunity to buy compost bins and obtain information about recycling, composting, and water conservation. For the past two years the Recycling Cmte has used some of its annual funds to provide discounted compost bins to encourage people to compost and keep kitchen waste out of the trash stream where it is very expensive to burn.

### **ARC BUDGET**

Our budget this year is \$3000 (up from \$1800 in years past to support the discounted compost bin program). The Town Meeting based on the Finance Committee recommendation increased our allocation since we have been able to demonstrate over the past several years that our efforts to support recycling and composting can save the town significant money (by our estimate ca. \$1.5M over the past six years).

### **SOLID WASTE**

Solid waste is composed of three main components: Trash, recycling and yard waste. Currently the Town pays \$67/ton (termed the tip fee) to burn trash at the Andover plant. We collect yard waste for composting at a Lexington facility paying only for the collection/transport costs. Recycling (all paper, scrap paper, newspaper, bottles, cans, cardboard, glass containers) goes to a plant in Avon for sorting and here again the town pays for only the collection/transport cost (i.e. there is no tip fee).

#### SINGLE STREAM RECYCLING

Single Stream Recycling means that any container can be put out with a mix of any recyclable items, and NOT that trash and recycling can be combined in the same bin. Blue bins can be used, or residents can get green stickers (from Town Hall, DPW Yard on Grove St, or at one of our four events each year) to put on any container up to 30 gals so it's clearly marked for Waste Management as recycling and not trash.

#### MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE

Municipal Solid Waste is the total of trash, recycling, yard waste (as noted above) and white goods (appliances, CRTs). A few years ago when the committee began really working on outreach and education, we burned about 19,000 tons. Last year we were down to 15,300 but the curve has flattened out and we are seeking new ways to reach residents who have not been recycling or help people divert more of their household waste to recycling or composting and out of the trash.

#### DIVERSION RATE

If you calculate the total tons of all the forms of waste and the percentage that is diverted away from the trash we pay to burn, you get a percentage. Assuming an annual MSW total of 24,000 tons/year, Arlington has 36% diversion rate now, which is very good for a town in Massachusetts. Our goal is to get to 50% diversion, which would save the town considerable money and provide considerable additional environmental and resource utilization savings.

#### MSW PROGRAM COST

The current cost of the total waste program is \$3.2 million. About \$2.2 million is the collection costs of having the trucks come thru to pick everything up. The rest is the "tip fee" of the cost to burn the trash (again at \$67/ton and increasing annually).

#### PAY AS YOU THROW

In April 2010, Town Meeting voted to approve the idea of a Pay As You Throw program, though it deferred implementation and final details into the future. The Town Manager supports the idea, but wanted to combine PAYT with a new financial plan or override recommendation that would be put to the voters in the near future. He worked with a small committee to research the proposal and they proposed a flat fee for every bag, two sizes of bags (so two prices) and allowed each household one large item per week on the curb without needing any extra stickers.

#### RECYCLING INITIATIVES

The committee has worked to inform residents about various options and answer questions about the program. A few years ago, we used our budget to pay for a pilot cardboard bin to allow 24/7 drop off at the town yard for cardboard. At the time, Waste Managements trucks required all cardboard be cut down to 30" lengths and the drop-off bins were simpler for many people since you only had to flatten the boxes to get them into the bins. This program was so successful that the town took it over and added additional bins - there are now 3 bins that are collected twice/week at the DPW Yard on Grove Street.

#### COLLECTION BIN NETWORK

The committee continues to publicize a network of bins that allow various items to be dropped off 24/7. Cardboard, books, DVDs/Cds, clothes/shoes, newspaper and junk mail all have collection bins around town and a map showing their location is posted on the town website on the recycling page.

#### UNCLE SAM RECYCLING POSTER

The composting bin discounts at the Eco-Fest are a similar program. Also posted on the web is "Uncle Sam" poster that we designed a few years ago. Uncle Sam was from Arlington, so it seems fitting to use "his" updated slogan: Uncle Sam wants YOU to recycle.

#### OTHER ARC EFFORTS

We also answer questions that appear on the Arlington E-list, help to publicize e-waste collection events, hand out reusable shopping and 'Uncle Sam' recycling bags, publish the occasional op-ed piece in the Arlington Advocate and work collaboratively with environmental 'groups' in the elementary, middle and high school (SAVE Club)

#### MEETING COMMENTS

Hong Yin suggested doing a small info card or magnet (approx. 4 x 5.5") with recycling details for single stream. She will try to work on that this fall. Our numbers show that people need a little more information and encouragement if we want to increase our rate. We need more ideas this year about what confuses people.

Robert McGill asked if we can create more information on the benefits. In addition to the cost savings to the town, what else does recycling accomplish?

Katrina Wheelock had some statistics on jobs created at recycling plants and at companies that use recycled materials, but we need to work on how to make it seem interesting or relevant to Arlington residents.

#### TOWN DAY PLANNING

\This event is our biggest promotional event of the year. At town day, we need volunteers to man the booth to hand out materials. There is a constant stream of folks stopping by to learn more and ask questions about recycling in Arlington. So as a volunteer you will not be bored as you can not only provide recycling information but can also hand out 'Uncle Sam' recycling stickers and easy-on Uncle Sam 'tattoos' for the kids.

While DPW staff are on hand during the event (they are great at answering specific/detailed solid waste/household hazardous waste etc questions), Town Day really works best when we have two to three volunteers helping out at the booth as it one of the busiest booths on Mass Ave.

Several years ago in an attempt to promote recycling at town day (and to 'walk the walk' so to speak) we began placing 16-20 can/bottle recycling collection bins along Mass Ave during town day. As one can imagine given the large attendance at town day by the end of the event the bins are pretty full and we need to collect all the recycling bins with bottles and cans and carry them to the WM recycling truck (Academy Street) as well as dismantle the collection bins (fold them) and transport them back to town hall for storage until the next event.

#### TOWN DAY VOLUNTYEERS - We need your help

We'll send out email shortly to ask for volunteers. We need a couple people in the morning to help with setup, some mid-day and in the afternoon during the event itself. And to help with cleanup and the can/bottle collection effort we are hoping to schedule several additional folks for the last hour of the day.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

We learned at this month's meeting that Katrina and Adrian Wheelock will be moving away from Arlington later this month. We also lost Anneli Mynttinen and her girls who were also regular volunteers at many of our events due to their move over the summer to Lexington.

The committee thanks them their enthusiastic support, work at the committee's events and on our educational efforts over the years and wishes them well in their new homes/locations!

#### NEXT MEETING

October 7th at 7:30, Town Hall Annex, upstairs conference room